

### Background

Many consumers find the offers they receive for new telephone service – especially long distance service – confusing. Here is a guide to some common terms used to describe the different types of telephone service.

### Types of Service

- **Local Exchange Service**

Local exchange service provides calling within your exchange. An exchange is a specified area which usually encompasses a city, town, or village and its environs.

- **Local Toll (intraLATA) Service**

Local toll service (also called intraLATA, local long distance, or regional toll service) provides calling within a geographic area known as a Local Access and Transport Area (LATA). Per-minute toll charges usually apply to these calls. LATAs were formed in 1984 when the former Bell System was broken up into Bell Operating Companies, which handled local exchange and local toll services, and AT&T, which handled interLATA long distance service in competition with other long distance providers. Today, these companies (or the companies they have become) handle all types of calls, but LATAs still define local toll calling areas.

Local toll calls may be made within your area code or to a different area code across town, in the next county, or, in some cases, an adjoining state. You must dial "1" before making a local toll call, even if the area code is the same as yours. Today these calls can be carried by your local exchange telephone company or your long distance company.

### Types of Service (cont'd.)

Some local telephone companies offer an optional bundle of local exchange and local toll service for a single monthly fee.

- **Expanded Local Exchange Service**

Expanded local exchange service extends a local exchange calling area and eliminates local toll costs; however, you may see expanded local exchange service as a surcharge on your telephone bill.

Because local exchange service, local toll service, and expanded local exchange service usually involve calls within a state, they are usually regulated by your state public service commission. If you have a problem regarding these services, you can find contact information for your state public service commission at [www.naruc.org](http://www.naruc.org). You may also contact your state consumer protection agency, Better Business Bureau, or state Attorney General's office to learn about the protections and remedies available to you as a consumer of intrastate telephone service. You can find contact information for these organizations in the blue pages or government section of your local telephone directory.

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## Types of Service (cont'd.)

### • Long Distance Toll (interLATA) Service

Long distance toll (interLATA) service includes all calls outside the local exchange and local toll service areas, calls that originate in one LATA and terminate in another, and international calls. Long distance toll calls can be between two LATAs in the same state, such as a call from San Diego to San Francisco, or between LATAs in different states. Long distance toll service includes international service, except in Hawaii, where international service is separate from long distance service. When purchasing long distance toll service, remember to specifically ask whether international calls are included in monthly long distance calling plans.

The FCC regulates long distance toll service between states and international service. If you have a problem with your long distance toll or international service, you can file a complaint with the FCC on the Internet at [www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html); by e-mail ([fccinfo@fcc.gov](mailto:fccinfo@fcc.gov)); by calling the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY; or by mail sent to:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
Consumer Inquiries and Complaints Division  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

Include the following information in your complaint:

- name, address, and telephone number where you can be reached during the business day;
- as much specific information about your complaint as possible;
- a description of the steps you have taken to resolve the complaint yourself;

## Types of Service (cont'd.)

- the names and telephone numbers of the company employees that you talked to in an effort to resolve your complaint, and the dates that you talked with these people;
- copies of bills listing any disputed charges (circle the disputed charges on the bill itself); and
- the relief you are requesting (such as adjustment of charges).

## Equal Access and Slamming

Equal access allows telephone subscribers to choose a preferred telephone company or companies to handle their local toll and long-distance toll (including international) calls from their traditional, wireline telephones. Where equal access is available, subscribers may choose separate preferred telephone companies for each of these services or one preferred telephone company for both of them. Subscribers can place local toll and long distance toll calls using their preferred telephone company or companies by dialing 1 (or 011 for international calls) plus the appropriate code and telephone number. Subscribers can place calls using other telephone companies by dialing a 1010XXX access code. Subscribers can change their preferred telephone company or companies at any time, but may be charged for doing so.

Wireless telephone companies are not required to provide equal access, and generally choose a preferred telephone company for their subscribers. If wireless companies allow use of "dial-around" 1010XXX access codes, they can choose to charge their customers a fee for doing so.

The FCC has adopted detailed "slamming" rules to prevent telephone companies from switching subscribers from one preferred telephone

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### Equal Access and Slamming (cont'd.)

company to another without authorization. To learn more about the FCC's slamming rules, go to [www.fcc.gov/slamming](http://www.fcc.gov/slamming).

If you have been slammed, first try to resolve your problem with the telephone company that slammed you. Then call your preferred telephone company and tell it that you want to be reinstated to the same service you had before the slam.

You can also file a complaint. Depending on where you live, you will either file with your state or with the FCC. You can find a list of states that accept slamming complaints at [www.fcc.gov/slamming](http://www.fcc.gov/slamming).

If your state accepts slamming complaints, your state public service commission or Attorney General's office can advise you on the appropriate filing procedures.

If your state does not handle slamming complaints, you may file a complaint with the FCC by e-mail ([slamming@fcc.gov](mailto:slamming@fcc.gov)); fax (202-418-0035); the Internet ([www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html](http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/complaints.html)); or mail:

Federal Communications Commission  
Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau  
ATTN SLAM TEAM, Room CY-A257  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554.

### Equal Access and Slamming (cont'd.)

Include the following information in your slamming complaint:

- your name, address, and telephone number;
- the telephone number that was slammed;
- your e-mail address;
- the name of the telephone company that slammed you;
- the name of your preferred local toll telephone company;
- the name of your preferred long distance (including international) company;
- a complete statement of facts;
- **COPIES** of your telephone bill showing the charges that you are disputing; **(IMPORTANT: If you file using e-mail, your bill must be attached electronically to your e-mail. Otherwise, you must file by letter and attach paper copies of your bill.)**
- whether or not you have paid any of the disputed charges; and
- the specific relief that you want.

If you have questions about filing your slamming complaint, you can call the FCC's Consumer Center at 1-888-CALL-FCC (1-888-225-5322) voice; or 1-888-TELL-FCC (1-888-835-5322) TTY.

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*To receive information on this and other FCC consumer topics through the Commission's electronic subscriber service, click on <http://www.fcc.gov/cgb/contacts/>.*

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